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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0105  
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0346  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 3494  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 3515  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 6402  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2397  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 4160  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 8380  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 6787  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 0252  
RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON 1036  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2777  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 1700  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 1469  
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 2291  
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE 2119  
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RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 001172

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV PHUM](#) [PINR PREF SL IN](#)

SUBJECT: RECENT SRI LANKAN TAMIL REFUGEE ARRIVALS IN SOUTH  
INDIA REACH 400

REF: A. CHENNAI 00103 (NOTAL)

[1](#)B. COLOMBO 00200

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Although the promise of upcoming talks to strengthen the Cease-Fire Agreement has slowed the flow of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees coming to South India, there are now about 400 refugees at the Mandapam refugee transit camp in Tamil Nadu, near Palk Bay. In recent meetings, UNHCR and OFFER, a refugee NGO, predicted that the likelihood of additional mass arrivals is small. Due to continuing violence in Sri Lanka, UNHCR has stopped all refugee repatriation until conditions on the island improve. Tamil Nadu Rehabilitation Commissioner Ambedkar Rajkumar has been widely praised for his work to oversee conditions in the government camps and to make life as positive as possible for the approximately 50,000 total refugees, some of whom have been living there since the 1980s. One Delhi-based Sri Lanka analyst worried about the LTTE's history of sneaking in operatives disguised as refugees, and warned that all of the new wave of refugees are not necessarily "genuine," but Tamil Nadu intelligence officials are carefully reviewing the background of all new arrivals before releasing them to local camps. End Summary.

Refugees Likely to Slow to a Trickle  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) In recent meetings, both V. Bharathy, Associate Repatriation Officer at UNHCR in Chennai, and S.C.

Chandrasahsan, a Sri Lankan Tamil and the leader of Organization for Eelam Refugees Rehabilitation (OFERR), a refugee NGO in Tamil Nadu, agreed that the number of refugees arriving on the Tamil Nadu coast has increased from 77 in mid-January (Ref A) to 300 by the end of January and 400 in mid-February. With talks to strengthen the Cease-Fire Agreement (Ref B) scheduled for February 22-23, the likelihood of additional mass arrivals is small. The current trickle is likely to continue but, unless conditions in Sri Lanka worsen, they do not anticipate a major influx of refugees.

#### And UNHCR Repatriation Grinds to a Halt

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13. (SBU) Due to the recent violence in Sri Lanka, UNHCR suspended all repatriation activities in early January 2006 until the situation on the island improves. UNHCR reported that before the recent influx of new refugees, there was great and growing interest among refugees to return to their homes in Sri Lanka. During 2005, UNHCR processed about 6,000 applications for repatriation from the approximately 50,000 refugees in the government camps.

14. (SBU) Due to the "fourth wave" of refugees, UNHCR believes that the GOI has temporarily abandoned previous plans to reduce rice and other subsidies they provide to the refugee community. The GOI was discussing a possible reduction, which might have increased repatriation activities. Camp conditions remain stable but less than ideal, with deteriorated housing the primary problem. Both UNHCR and Chandrasahsan were lavish in their praise for

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Government of Tamil Nadu Rehabilitation Commissioner Ambedkar Rajkumar, who is responsible for conditions in the camps. Both commented that he truly cares about the refugees and does his best within the limitations of the subsidies provided by the GOI to make life as positive as possible for the refugees.

#### LTTE "Refugee" Concerns

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15. (SBU) M.R. Swamy Narayan, a Delhi-based Indo-Asian News Service journalist and Prabhakaran biographer, expressed concern that not all of the refugees are necessarily "genuine." Since Rajiv Gandhi's LTTE assassin originally came from Sri Lanka disguised as a refugee, Narayan raised the possibility that other LTTE members may be using the opportunity to sneak into India and, in some cases, might be receiving GOI refugee support, and in others, disappearing. Aware of this possibility, state intelligence officials have established a 30 day "quarantine" period during which newly-arrived refugees are questioned by intelligence officials to determine their antecedents and connections. Only after this rigorous review are refugees permitted to join the general population of refugees at the residential camps in Tamil Nadu.

16. (U) Consulate General Chennai contributed to this message.

17. (U) Visit New Delhi's Classified Website:  
(<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/sa/newdelhi/>)  
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